



St Mark's Parish Magazine
September 2020

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Your Views & Contributions

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LETTER FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

So many events and plans have had to be postponed because of Covid-19. Greenbelt, the Christian Arts Festival is no exception. This year there will be no camping, no big tents and outdoor gathering with thousands of others from around the country.



When I was younger, I attended some of these camping get-togethers and have invariably found them stimulating and rewarding experiences. The hardest job is usually to decide what to do since there was so much to choose from. Big name speakers sometimes are disappointing particularly if you have had to queue a long time to listen. On one occasion I remember queuing for what seemed like hours only to be turned away just before admission because the venue had reached its capacity. Instead I joined another talk being given by an ex-Roman Catholic priest. Funny how things work out. The one talk that I didn't plan to go to turned out to be one of the ones that made the biggest impression on me.

The speaker addressed the need in all of us to be listened to. Most conversation, he said, tended to be a series of "intersecting monologues." I thought that was a wonderfully true observation. Very often what happens is that we talk to each other about our own lives without really listening to the other person. We simply wait for them to pause in talking about themselves long enough so that we can carry on talking about ourselves. Epictetus, the Greek philosopher who wrote in the second century, was wise enough to observe: "we have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak." Biology, however, doesn't always triumph over the human tendency to focus on self. Yet having someone who truly listens to us is a precious gift indeed.

God too is very good at listening to our prayers. In prayer we pour out our concerns to him sometimes in a long stream of heartfelt need. But it is as important to listen to God as it is to speak to him. The latter does not always come easily to us. But to listen to God and to listen carefully to those around us can be a great blessing. A life that consists of a series of "intersecting monologues" lives only for itself and this has a tendency to diminish all. To listen to others and to listen to God requires us to raise our horizons upwards and outwards.

As we venture into the Autumn it will be more important than ever to be listening to what God might be saying to us as a Church. What does he want us to do with this situation that we face? Returning to "normal" is not everybody's desire particularly when normal had been so busy and often damaging to people and planet. So, what is God saying and have we learned to listen carefully enough to hear?

With every blessing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Manton".

A Good Way of Life

Some time ago the short article in this magazine on "Love" coupled with the death of my friend Henry Miller (who you had all been praying for), caused me to give a little thought to the concept of a Christian Life. Of course, our template is Jesus Christ. However, I often think that his example is simply far beyond me. I remind myself that he used to enjoy a good party sometimes with the more, shall we say, boisterous of company. That makes it easier, though in fact it should make the example more difficult to follow.

We are all formed not only by our genes, parents and upbringing but also by the many and various characters we meet during our lives. It might be a schoolteacher, teaching off piste, a priest, a scout master or just the one sitting beside us at work. One such example for me was my friend Henry Miller.

Chris and I, when we were first married, used to help with an open youth club. Usually we alternated our weeks; one there, one baby-sitting. Chris met a young couple who came to help and arranged to go to the cinema with Ruby, the wife. That evening I had to fix a new fan belt to my car to go to work the next day. As she left for her evening out Chris said "if you have any trouble, Ruby's husband is a garage mechanic. They live at 269". My family has always quite rightly been very confident in my need for backup!

That evening it chose to pour with rain. I could loosen the three bolts but still the belt just would not go on. I was very wet and cold. My hands were bruised. Very reluctantly I paddled up to 269.

The door was opened by a man in working clothes, of my build but more muscular. He had a big black beard and nothing on his feet. I explained. He said he was baby-sitting two daughters. I turned to go. "Just a minute," he said. He slipped on carpet slippers with holes in the toes and draped a raincoat over his shoulders. I explained the detailed problem as we paddled back to 134.

I pointed out the loose nuts and he tried the belt but no, it was too tight. "Are you sure this is the right belt?" he asked. Some mechanic this, I thought. "Certain".

He opened the car front door and tried the lights. "Well, the lights work," he said. I knew they had nothing to do with the fan. We again bent over the engine. Suddenly it fired and I hit my head on the bonnet. "Jaypers, why did you do that?" he said. I protested it had nothing to do with me. "You need to be careful with this car, it has a mind of its own".

We went back to the belt and to my astonishment it was now on all three wheels, just as it should be. As Henry tightened the bolts, I realised my leg had been well and truly pulled. When he had pressed a button, the engine fired, and the fly wheel had turned bouncing the belt into place. I was so grateful, and we were both thoroughly wet. That is how I met Henry.

Henry's father was sexton of the Church of Ireland, St Caneses Cathedral Kilkenny. He not only looked after the fabric of the Cathedral but was also always out and about visiting parishioners. Maybe that was Henry's first template.

Henry was a car mechanic, Rolls Royce and Jaguar trained. With his wife and two daughters they moved to England in search of work and he had no problem finding a job in South East London. But house prices meant his family of four now growing to five, had no chance of a house. We persuaded him that since in his trade he could get a job anywhere why not move to the North? One weekend our visit to Beeston Notts coincided with his visit to Nottingham house hunting. To cut a long story short with some luck we helped him find a suitable house in Beeston. Soon he had both a home and a job at Truemans, the Rolls Royce and Jaguar specialists there.

I visited him at work. He was given the work on E type Jaguars, a famous sports car which he said spent more time in the garage than on the road. He was only a mechanic but already it was to him that others came with their problems. Over time he rose to Works Manager. One Easter, he refused to work on Good Friday. The senior management explained that he had a duty to give an example to the workers. His attitude might cost him his job. His reply was that it was not in his terms of employment to tell others when they should work and as for example he said he was giving a good one. He would be at church for on his knees for three hours that day. He was not sacked.

One winter a director told Henry that he had received a complaint from a local well-known doctor and was asked to deal with it personally. Recently the doctor had bought a new Rover and he had trouble starting it. He had brought it in several times and thought he had been badly treated. Henry arranged for the car to be left out and that night the frost was so severe he had a job getting into the car which started first time. Other checks showed nothing wrong. When the doctor arrived to collect his car Henry had a bone china tea service, normally used by the board, ready in an office. He said he had some very bad news, sat the doctor down and offered him tea. Then he explained all the checks he had carried out and ended, "this morning the car was frozen up and it started first time, so I have to tell you there is nothing wrong with your car. We now have to look closely at the driver. Have you read your handbook?" Taken aback the doctor replied that he had been driving cars for thirty years. "Ah, but not this one," said Henry. He took the doctor to the car and they practiced starting. The doctor had not been using the new style choke correctly. After that the doctor when bringing in his car always made a point of seeing Henry for a chat.

Henry, Ruby, their two girls and Kevin the latest arrival, never missed church on Sunday and always went smartly dressed. The large congregation was very mixed with artisans, office workers and several dons from the University. When I went Henry was always in great demand and after some years, he was elected Church Warden, of Beeston Parish Church. (Many years later the Bishop of Southwark, Roy Williamson retired there and made this his church). Henry took his wardens duties very seriously and like his father before him, often went visiting.

When his second daughter got married, he decorated the hall, not just the streamers but he painted the whole thing including toilets and kitchen. On the day Leslie, the older very pretty girl spent much time on her appearance. June, the bride, helped with the self-catering. When it was time to go to church she simply put on her bridal dress and shook out her voluminous chestnut hair and walked down the road. With her colourful complexion and beaming smile, she outshone everyone, "How can you compete with that?" said Leslie.

Henry was drilled by Ruby his wife on what to say. He began his speech nervously. "Today is a very happy day. I look upon it not so much the gaining of a son as the loosing of a daughter". This was greeted with gasps and then laughter. Henry looked up with his beaming smile and twinkling eyes. "I was afraid I might get that wrong", he said.

One Sunday lunch our meal was interrupted by a knock on the door. Henry answered it. Back to his lunch Ruby remarked, "I hope you did not give that tramp another fiver, it will only go on drink." "Sure, I did," said Henry, "and I would give it to him five times to be spent on drink rather than not give when he needs a meal."

In those days I attended periodic meetings of Inspectors in London from all over the UK. Nelson lived in Nottingham. Before one meeting we were in a pub when he told us a story which he said would restore our faith in human nature. He had had his very old car for many years and whilst passing a show room decided to see the new Rover. He was astonished by its mechanical complexity.

"Have you found out how it works, because if so, you might tell me", said a voice and he turned to see a white coated employee looking at him. "I am not buying new" he said "it's too expensive for me but I might take a second hand one". "Is that your Rover on the forecourt" asked the man. Nelson admitted it was. "What is wrong with it," came the question? "Well sometimes it's hard to start and it seems to have lost some power". "The bodywork looks fine to me. Why spend your money unnecessarily. Why don't you bring it in for a service and I will tell you whether you should trade it in or not?" So, Nelson did this and when he collected it the mechanic admitted he had "fiddled with it a bit", but it should go better now and last for several years. He was only charged for a service. Nelson was now delighted with the performance of his rejuvenated car.

I interrupted him. "Nelson, I can tell you the man's name. It's Henry Miller." Nelson, not knowing my connection, was astonished. "How could you possibly know?" he said. "There is only one Henry Miller," I replied.

Whilst living in Beeston, Henry was on his way home from Nottingham on a Friday. It was a foul, wet, dark and windy, winter night. The rain poured down limiting visibility till the traffic came to a sudden halt. Henry left his car to see what was up. He found a black bundle near the middle of the road and other people standing by. He had to lay down in the wet to ask the very elderly woman where it hurt. He found she was blind and hurt in body, both legs, arm and head. He stayed beside her till the ambulance came and went with her to A&E. He got home very late that evening.

He visited her frequently during her long spell in hospital to mend the multiple breaks. When she eventually came out he still visited her in her flat in Beeston. She had one good neighbour but no other friends or family. He took her to church each Sunday for many years. There she made friends with some of the other elderly women and she said that the accident was a happy chance since it opened up her life.

When Henry was persuaded to become Church Warden he knew most of the large congregation personally. When staying with him, if we went shopping, his main occupation was stopping to speak with yet another someone he knew. When he failed to remember the name of a woman, which was often, he would address her as "My Flower of the East". I am far from sure what this meant, but it usually evoked a blush and a peal of laughter.

In his late fifties Henry and Ruby achieved an ambition to return to Ireland and Johnstown, the town they came from. It's not far from where Father Dan was brought up. There he practiced his personal magic on the community, becoming a Reader, but had many 'outside' activities.

Life was not always easy for the Millers. Their two girls were married and settled in England but Kevin went with them to Ireland. In England Kevin had been middle of the class but in Ireland he excelled especially in IT. When he left college he travelled all over Europe setting up computer systems and earnt good money. Married he settled down in Dublin and with two children and now worked only in Dublin. He doted on them. Whilst the two children were still little he fell ill with cancer and after a long spell, died. Both parents were shocked. Henry for a time seemed in denial. Their recovery took years.

Henry now worked for low wages cutting peat mechanically but was always helping the mechanic mend the machinery. Just as in his job in Beeston if anyone needed help they went to Henry. He ran large whist drives in the church hall for charities and he and his wife opened their wonderful garden every year to support the Wheel Chair Association. (There was no entrance fee or charge for the teas but they commonly raised four thousand Euros from gifts).

The garden is a story on its own. Ruby and Henry converted a small field into five gardens all interlinked and each with its own special sculptured character. The interest of the flowers, croquet lawn, and huge goldfish pond is supplemented by restored ancient farm machines and other more original sculptures from Ruby's fertile imagination. Henry also regularly helped to raise money to build an old peoples' home.

At one of Henry's whist drives between hands opponents made themselves known to me and asked where I was from. One such elderly lady with a very pale and drawn face asked me how I had got to know Henry. She then told me that she'd had to go to a hospital in faraway Dublin for two years for her nerves. "When I left, I heard from nobody except Henry. By bus it is five and a half hour trip to Dublin and another half hour or so to the hospital, the same on return. Henry visited me every month without fail. I hardly knew him before. He was my life-line to the outside world. Someone cared."

On one trip to town we called into the Garda's house; cream above the waist high handrail and chocolate below (for those over eighty!). In the bare front room sat the young Garda behind a large desk. Henry stood beside him and I took a chair opposite the desk but rather back out of view as it happened from the door. The topic seemed to be drunken driving. There was the sound of heavy footsteps echoing on the lino along the passage. Then a young man entered, said good morning politely and placed a slip on the table. Shortly after there was the staccato sound of high heels clip clopping along the corridor. The Garda looked at his watch. "She'll be late again," he said. Next a tractor stopped outside of the window and a farmer in muddy gum boot made the journey and added his slip to the pile. Next a whole team of workers I had previously spotted by a hole in the road with traffic lights entered en mass from their lorry with a flourish of slips. The answer dawned on me. These were claims to unemployment benefit by the early birds on their way to work. The police were acting for Social Security.

I suggested they must have wondered what Henry was doing there. The Garda smiled, "everybody knows Henry. No, it's you they will be talking about. They will all have seen you as they tuned from the desk. Engraved on their memories will be a clean-shaven man in a smart jacket. Who was he and what was he doing there, is what they will be thinking?"

On one of my visits Henry invited me to go with him to a local Catholic old peoples' home which he visited every week. (As I have said, he was a member of The Church of Ireland). First, he filled his jacket pockets with sweets and also took two packs of cards. He carried a heavy linen bag.

They were seated in a horseshoe round the TV most apparently asleep. Henry offered a man a sweet for which he got thanks. After a pause the man looked round to see where the sweet had come from. In a loud voice he declaimed "Henry is here everyone!"

The room stirred, comments were made and there was some laughter. "Anyone for cards?" Henry asked and the room began slowly to rise to its collective feet. One old lady said, "I would but I have never played cards". "Don't you worry about that," said Henry "you look to me like a natural card player".

One of the dining rooms contained a very large oval table and about fifteen gathered round that and the decision was to play 25's. Apart from the old lady they all seemed to know how to play it, though for me as it progressed it seemed quite mad. Top card was the Jack of Diamonds, second to top the Jack of Trumps. The Queen of Spades was special, and I was thoroughly confused. From the bag he carried Henry distributed very small value Euro coins. Henry had to explain values and moves to the little old lady. We played, joked and laughed for the rest of the afternoon until it was time for tea and no one seemed tired. At the end when all the piles of coins were added up, the little old lady had the largest pile. "It's a long while since I enjoyed myself so much." she said, "Me, a card player, and I never knew it!"

During the afternoon Henry had enquired of Margaret. One said she was ill. Another said that she could not be bothered to get up. When we saw the manager, she gave us each a small glass of whisky and Henry again enquired about Margaret. "I don't think there is much wrong. She just makes a huge fuss about getting up." Henry took me along the corridor to Margaret's room. She was pleased to see him but evasive about getting out of bed. After their chat Henry said. "I shall call in at 10.30 tomorrow and I shall expect to see you washed and dressed." Margaret was non-committal. The next morning Henry said to Ruby "I shall have to call into the Home on my way to Thurles." We did that. Margaret was up, washed, dressed and having her breakfast.

Another story about the Home was in the Autumn. The message came through that they were looking for a fit 92-year-old who had gone missing. They had phoned the son's wife. Dad was not there. The Garda was out and many from the Home besides us were searching the roads for him. Eventually we all gave up. That evening the man walked into the Home tired but unhurt. Questioned he explained that he had been to his son's farm (which used to be his) and had gone straight to the fields to help get the wheat in.

The anecdotes I have referred to are simply different insights into Henry's nature. Being Irish it is natural that Henry should like a good chat and a good crack (a joke). Whatever he was doing or whoever he was with, his inner self shone through his dark, mischievous and twinkling eyes because he simply liked people. He was interested in their lives and he was interested in each of them. For him, helping others was, I think, scarcely a conscious act. He did it just in the natural course of living.

Throughout his long terminal illness Henry took his bible to bed for the long quiet periods during the night and, except for the last three days, each morning he dressed and met the coming day uncomplainingly. His weight fell from fourteen stone to six, and for a long time this very strong man knew weakness. He ordered his own funeral

service and wrote his 'thanksgiving' for his life which was read at his funeral. So, he also showed us how to die.

My point, of course, is that I think we can see Christ in others, not perhaps consistently, but in revelations. Parcelled together into our characters, this with our prayers and Christian worship, gives us an understanding of others which we can strive to convert into practical deeds and relationships and a good way of life.

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News from the Church of England

Low-income families hit hard in lockdown

A study commissioned by the Church of England and Child Poverty Action Group has found that families with low-incomes have increased stress levels and are struggling with deteriorating living standards as a direct result of Covid-19.

It has been a double-edged sword for this group, as the findings in a report, *Poverty in a Pandemic; The impact of coronavirus on low-income families and children* show that 8 out of 10 are in a worse position financially because of a decrease in pay during lockdown and 9 out of 10 have had increases in food and utility bills from being at home more.

The report shows that people have had to seek help from the voluntary sector, as well as friends and family and taking mortgage payment holidays and loan holidays from their banks.

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, who speaks for the Church of England on matters relating to children and families, said: "Although some commentators have talked about the last few months as an opportunity to live a simpler lifestyle, this report sets out in stark detail how for many families it has been a constant struggle."

"It bears out what churches have experienced first-hand in every community: that families have been placed under huge strain; that the worst off have again been worst hit and, for many, things now could get worse rather than better."

"In these unprecedented times, we all need to ask ourselves urgently how we can help our neighbour. It is also imperative that the Government does all that it can to protect families and children by implementing the practical recommendations in this report. We all must play our part."

The report recommends that the government increases child benefits, expand free school meals eligibility and abolish the benefits cap. There is a follow up report planned for the end of the year.

Adapted from the article: <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/report-toll-lockdown-low-income-families>

Environmental News

The link between deforestation and Coronavirus

Life during the Coronavirus pandemic has been often described as unprecedented. The impact on people's health, mental wellbeing and finances have been impacted in ways we could not have imagined before March this year.

However, what if these unprecedented times became the new normal? Researchers are set to warn the UN that we can expect more pandemics in future if we continue to see the same levels of deforestation and biodiversity loss, as they have found clear evidence there is a link between land change of use and the spread of disease between animals and humans.

Each year tens of millions of hectares of rainforest is lost to logging, mining and farming. Wild animals are being used for food, medicine and tropical pets. As a result of these activities new species of microbes and viruses are being transmitted to new hosts such as domestic animals and humans. Many of these new bacteria and viruses are not known to scientists and if they thrive they can result in a new emerging disease.



Other diseases which have entered main stream populations in this way are HIV, which originated from Gorilla's and Chimpanzees which were slaughtered for meat and Ebola, past from bats to monkeys to humans.

If deforestation is starting the spread of these novel diseases then cheap air travel and Globalisation is fuelling it. Swine Flu was able to spread to every country in the world before scientists were able to work out what was happening.

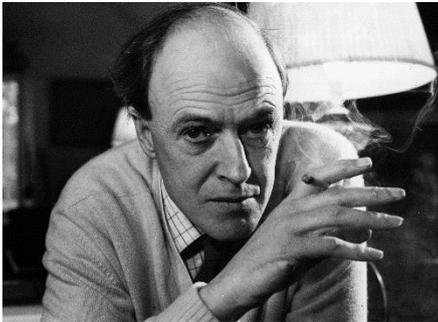
Researchers are recommending that money is invested in setting up a program to reduce the spill over of new diseases by reducing deforestation, ending wild meat trading and monitoring wildlife. They believe delaying this investment will cost much more in the long term.



Article adapted from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/30/rampant-destruction-of-forests-will-unleash-more-pandemics>

Roald Dahl



The 13 September is recognised as Roald Dahl day and a celebration of the man behind many much loved stories.

If he was still alive today Roald Dahl would be 104. He was born in Wales to Norwegian parents but suffered tragedy early on with the loss of his sister and his dad.

His mother sent him to boarding school and some of his early experiences inspired some of his writing including *Boy*, which was based on his time at Repton boarding school and also *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

In World War Two Roald signed up for the Air Force, but suffered injuries in a plane crash. He returned to active duty and then supplied intelligence to MI6.

Roald Dahl married twice, first to an American actress, the mother of his 5 children and after 30 years they divorced and in her autobiography she painted Dahl very differently to how he is perceived by the outside world. He then married Felicity Crosland who set up a children's charity and museum in his name.

Roald Dahl's writing career took off in 1961, at the age of 45. The first book he had published was *James and the Giant Peach*.



He went on to write both adult and children's books as well as screenplays including for the James Bond film; *You only die twice* and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*.

Roald Dahl died in 1990 at the age of 74 and is buried in Buckinghamshire.

In celebration of this special day and also National Read a Book Day on the 6th September, here are a few questions to see how well you know the Roald Dahl stories:

In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, what do Charlie's grandparents do all day?

- A. Eat sweets
- B. Play Cards
- C. Stay in bed

In *George's marvellous medicine*, what colour is George's medicine after he boils it?

- A. Gorgeous and gruesome green



- B. Fearsome, fiery red
- C. Deep and brilliant blue

In George's marvellous medicine, what does Grandma tell George to eat three times a day?

- A. Cabbage
- B. Cauliflower
- C. Curly Kale

In Billy and the Minpins, what is the leader of the Minpin's called?

- A. Don Mini
- B. Don Mani
- C. Don Mono

You can find all the answers...in the books.

Information taken from www.roalddahl.com where you can find many more resources.

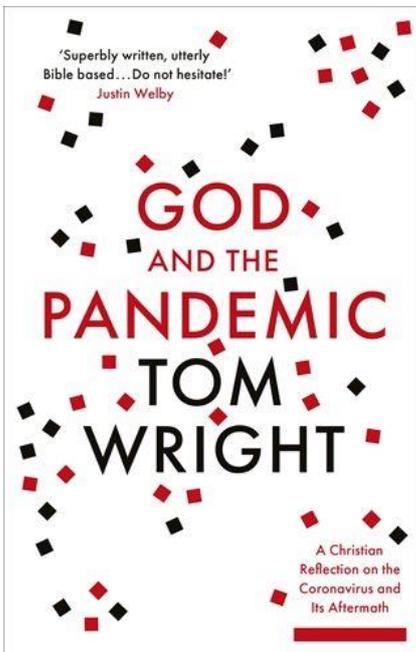
Book Review

This month we review: God and the Pandemic

As I write this, the pandemic wears on, continuing to affect life far longer and far more deeply than most of us could have imagined at the outset. For many individuals and churches, the initial wave of fear and paralysis has given way to a new way of life and mode of being in the world. Now, however, as the months wear on, deep theological reflection is needed as we consider what the pandemic means in the context of Christian faith and practice. With this book, hot off the press, N. T. Wright has given a gift to churches and Christians who long to think more seriously about what it means to be people of faith in the ongoing

context of the pandemic. What's more, Wright helps move Christians and churches from paralysis and fear to faithful response.

Wright roots his understanding of the pandemic and a Christian response to it in a biblical perspective. This helps him resist the "knee-jerk reactions" that have characterised some "Christian" responses to the pandemic: "This is a sign of the end times!" or, "God is judging humanity for our sins!" Wright begins the book with a



brief examination of these sorts of typical responses to the pandemic and tragedies throughout history. Yet rather than linger on the question of “Why?” Wright encourages readers to move toward “What can we do?”

Beginning with the Hebrew Scriptures, Wright invites readers to consider how early Jewish people of faith responded to their greatest tragedy: the Babylonian exile. In the book of Lamentations, he finds a powerful resonance with today: images of a devastated Jerusalem, empty city streets, suffering and scattered people, and cries for God’s help. Wright guides readers through a number of Psalms to remind readers that God does not work the way so many people have supposed throughout history: if we are good, good things will happen to us, and if we are bad, we’ll get what we deserve. Wright rather forcefully admonishes such a perspective: “Whenever anyone tells you that coronavirus means that God is calling people—perhaps you!—to repent, tell them to read Job. The whole point is that is not the point”. Job does not lead readers toward a satisfying conclusion, nor does Job give a once-and-for-all answer to the question of theodicy. Wright suggests that that is part of the point: “We are simply to know that when we are caught up in awful circumstances, apparent gross injustices, terrible plagues . . . at those points we are to lament, we are to complain, we are to state the case, and leave it with God”.

Turning to Jesus and the New Testament, Wright focuses on the story of the man born blind in John 9. Upon seeing the man, Jesus’ disciples ask whether his sin or his parents’ sin caused his blindness, but Jesus rejects their assumptions about the way God works. Instead, as Wright observes, “He looks forward to see what God is going to do about it”. Jesus then heals the man, displaying and embodying God’s sovereignty and power. Yet Wright also acknowledges the very real pain caused by suffering and by the pandemic, observing Jesus’ own anguish at the death of Lazarus in John 11: “the tears are real. The horror of death . . . is overwhelming, even for the Lord of life”. In Acts 11:27–30, Wright finds yet another story with a particular resonance for the current moment. In this narrative (one that I had entirely forgotten about, to be honest!), a prophet named Agabus announces to a group of Christians in Antioch that there will be a famine that ravages the entire world. Wright notes the response of the Christians: they do not attempt to lay blame, call for repentance, or assume that Jesus is returning soon. Rather, “They ask three simple questions: Who is going to be at special risk when this happens? What can we do to help? And who shall we send?”. This is not simply a pragmatic response, he observes; instead, it suggests that God responds to suffering in the world in and through God’s people. In the lives of Jesus, the disciples, and the early church, Wright sees a common pattern: “The point is that God’s kingdom is being launched on earth as in heaven, and the way it will happen is by God working through people of this sort”.

As Wright moves toward the end of the book, he again encourages readers to begin their response to the pandemic with lament. Following that, he calls readers to action, to be God’s “partners in the work of redemption and new creation”. This, he

says, is the task of human beings in Genesis, and in Jesus' ministry as well. It follows that this is the task readers are called to in response to the pandemic. Wright reminds readers that throughout Christian history, Jesus' followers have started hospitals, cared for the wounded, fed the hungry, and tended to the dying. Faithful response means looking for ways to address the very real needs in our communities and in the world. In this time of exile, he says, people of faith should "seek the welfare of the city".

It will come as no surprise to many readers that N. T. Wright is one of the first biblical scholars to publish a book on the pandemic. That he and the publisher have worked to bring this book so quickly to press is of great benefit to churches and people of faith. While some might suppose that this book will have a "short shelf life," given its specific topic, the pandemic will no doubt prove to leave lasting marks on individuals, society, and churches. This is likely the first of a wave of theological books in response, and it sets the right tone.

Wright writes for a broad audience. The book is accessible to lay readers, and would make a great book study for a church group. Its five brief chapters make it wholly suitable to a short-term study. Pastors who find themselves struggling to preach as the pandemic wears on will find in this slim volume much that will spark inspiration. I commend this book to all who are wrestling with theological questions in the midst of the pandemic.

Review written by Art Wright, sourced from: <http://cbfva.org/latest-news/book-review-god-and-the-pandemic-by-n-t-wright-2020-by-art-wright-cbfva-theologian-in-residence/>

Reader recipes

Courgette Loaf Cake

If like me you are continuing to enjoy a good crop on your courgettes, here is another great cake recipe.

Ingredients:-

2 large eggs
125ml of vegetable oil
85g of light brown soft sugar
350g courgette, finely grated
300g of plain flour
2 tsp of cinnamon
¼ tsp of nutmeg
½ tsp of bicarbonate of soda
½ tsp of baking powder
85g of walnuts, chopped
1 tsp of vanilla extract
140g of sultanas



Method:-

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/gas mark 4. Line a 2lb loaf tin with baking parchment.
2. Whisk together the eggs, oil and sugar. Add the courgettes and vanilla extract and mix well.
3. Mix the other ingredients into a bowl, then fold into the wet mixture.
4. Spoon into the loaf tin and bake for 1 hour, then leave to cool, then serve or freeze.

This recipe is taken from the BBC Good Food website and is great if you have had a bumper courgette harvest on your allotment. We would really like to hear from you with your favourite recipes. It really can be anything. Please email them to magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk.

Candlemouse Returns

*Another Tale about a Church Mouse for younger readers
Written by Sarah Cousins and illustrated by Roger Lloyd*

Candlemouse and the Bishop

Hallo, my name is Candlemouse and I live in St. Mark's church near the railway station in Reigate. I'm as small and as quiet as a mouse can be, so most people don't notice me, which gives me plenty of time to see them and the things that they do!

This story is about the time that I met the **bishop**. A bishop is a special person chosen to be in charge of the church in a **diocese** such as London or Guildford. The bishop's job is to take care of all the vicars in this area in the sort of way that a head teacher takes care of all the other teachers in your school.

The bishop came to visit the school and the church because that is part of the job to know what is going on in the area. People think of someone very grand and important when you say the word bishop. They see a picture of someone in special clothes, carrying a stick or staff and wearing a strange hat called a mitre. The bishop's hat reminded me very much of my grandma's tea cosy so I hope that it keeps him warm in winter.

Everyone got very excited when the bishop came and there were crowds of people wanting to meet him. All the important people from the town had been invited to church because sometimes that is the only way you can get them to go there if they are to meet someone else they think is important. The bishop wanted to see everyone but it was hard for everyone to say hello because of the crowd. I was feeling very small and quiet and stuck in my corner and I was sure that I could not get to see the bishop. The bishop turned around and spoke straight to me and looked at me with kind and laughing eyes and gently said:

"Candlemouse come out of your corner because I want to meet your family and have tea with you!"

So I scurried out of my corner and took the bishop home to meet my family and I'm not sure who was more surprised! I felt like Zacchaeus in the Bible when Jesus came to have tea with him but that's another story....

[If you want to read that story you will find it in the New Testament in Luke chapter 19]

Story and prayer copyright of Sarah Cousins and illustrations copyright of Roger Lloyd.

Let's pray

Loving Lord thank you for all the love and attention you give to us.

Thank you that when we're feeling small and insignificant you tell us we matter and that we're all your sons and daughters, equally beloved and valued.

Thank you for Zacchaeus whom Jesus forgave and loved. May we always know that forgiveness and humility as we are earthed in you. AMEN

This will be the penultimate story in the Candlemouse series. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sarah Cousins for sharing the wonderful stories and prayers which she has created each month.

If there is anyone in the congregation who would like to pick up the mantel and write for the magazine I would love to hear from you. magazine@stmarksreigate.co.uk

Puzzles

September Sudoku Puzzle

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | | 1 | | 8 | | 7 | | |
| 8 | 4 | 7 | 2 | | | 6 | | |
| | | | | 7 | 5 | 2 | | |
| 7 | 3 | | | 2 | 6 | 4 | 5 | |
| | | | 5 | | 8 | | | |
| | 6 | 4 | 1 | 3 | | | 2 | 9 |
| | | 6 | 7 | 5 | | | | |
| | | 2 | | | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 |
| | | 5 | | 6 | | 1 | | 2 |

August Solution

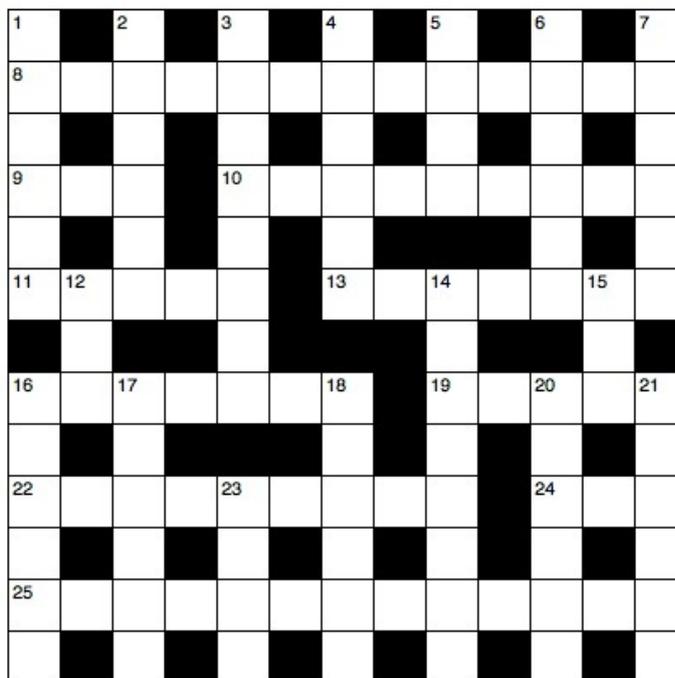
| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | 7 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 8 |
| 2 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 4 |
| 9 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 2 |
| 4 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 3 |
| 3 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 1 |
| 8 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 9 |
| 7 | 9 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 3 | 6 |
| 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| 1 | 3 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 5 |

September Crossword

Biblical references are from the New International Version

Across

- 8 Where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1) (7,6)
- 9 One of the parts of the body on which blood and oil were put in the ritual cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:14–17) (3)
- 10 Uncomfortable (3,2,4)
- 11 'Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have — ' (Malachi 1:3) (5)
- 13 Where Paul said farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17) (7)
- 16 'Jesus bent down and — to write on the ground with his finger' (John 8:6) (7)
- 19 Prophet from Moresheth (Jeremiah 26:18) (5)
- 22 Comes between Exodus and Numbers (9)
- 24 and 2 Down 'Then Elkanah went home to
Ramah, but the boy ministered before the
Lord under — the — ' (1 Samuel 2:11) (3,6)
- 25 There was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7) (4,3,6)



Down

- 1 Rough drawing (2 Kings 16:10) (6)
- 2 See 24 Across
- 3 Underground literature (including Christian books) circulated in the Soviet Union (8)
- 4 Lo, mash (anag.) (6)
- 5 The Bible's shortest verse: 'Jesus — ' (John 11:35) (4)
- 6 'Can a mother forget the baby at her — and have no compassion on the child she has borne?' (Isaiah 49:15) (6)
- 7 Can be seen in a dying fire (Psalm 102:3) (6)
- 12 'Send me, therefore, a man... experienced in the — of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem' (2 Chronicles 2:7) (3)
- 14 Second city of Cyprus (8)
- 15 United Nations Association (1,1,1)
- 16 One of the women who first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead (Mark 16:1) (6)
- 17 Braved (anag.) (6)
- 18 — of Evangelism, outreach initiative in the 1990s (6)
- 20 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and — in their own sight' (Isaiah 5:21) (6)
- 21 'Neither — nor depth... will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8:39) (6)
- 23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)

ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1 John 3 And James 8 Near 9 Omission 11 Theocratic 14 Asleep 15 By-path 17 Stalingrad 20 Backbone 21 Baca 22 Whose eye 23 Seth

DOWN: 1 Jonathan 2 Heavenly 4 No meat 5 Justifying 6 Maid 7 Sins 10 Acceptable 12 Marriage 13 Shadrach 16 Plenty 18 A bow 19 ECHO

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